

To: Ostrander, David[Ostrander.David@epa.gov]
From: Marsh, Rene
Sent: Wed 8/12/2015 4:12:48 PM
Subject: CNN INQUIRY- TIMELY

Hello David,

I am a correspondent with CNN covering the toxic spill in Colorado. I have some questions I'm looking to get an answer to before my deadline today 230p et. The administrator's presser will be well past my deadline. I hope you can assist me in answering these questions. I am trying to get a better understanding of the situation prior to the breach.

1) I've been told by non-profit group Earth Work Action that the mine in Colorado where the leak occurred has been leaking acid mine drainage at a rate of about 50-250 gallons a minute for years, along with 3 other mines in the area.

Is that your understanding?

2)The EPA contractors were attempting to put a pipe into the adit (mine opening) in order to collect the water and prevent it from continuing to pollute Cement Creek and the Animas River. Is that a correct characterization? I'd like to understand more about what happens during that process – what kind of equipment was used and why? What caused the leak? Was there a misjudgment of how much water had built up and the pressure?

3)Is it true that the EPA had wanted for years to designate the area a superfund site but received much opposition from community leaders? Can the EPA designate a site a superfund area without support from a community?

4)I'm also wondering if the type of mining pollution that was created by this particular mine is common with all mines.

5)Earth Work Action tells me that the price to clean up these sites has been estimated by the EPA at \$50 billion, and there is no steady funding source, leaving the EPA, states and local governments to cobble together resources for clean-up. Is that true?

6)The advocacy group also claims that 40% of the streams in the headwaters of western watersheds have been polluted by hardrock mining. Is that true? Is there more context needed here? Is there some amount of pollution that's allowable ie safe?

Many thanks,

Rene Marsh

CNN